

February 2014



Senior Health and Wellness Newsletter

Kentucky Department for Aging and Independent Living

Stay Safe This Winter

Winter weather can be hard on everyone, but it can be especially difficult for seniors. As we age, our bodies produce less heat and are less likely to feel a change in temperature. During cold weather, seniors are at a higher risk of developing health problems or injuries.

Cold weather puts an extra strain on the heart. When you are outside in the cold, your body is working hard to stay warm. Any additional activities may increase strain. If you have heart disease or high blood pressure, talk to your doctor before participating in any outdoor activities, including shoveling snow.

Try to stay indoors as much as possible during cold weather, particularly if there are high winds. If you have appointments, try to reschedule if possible. If you must go out, make trips as brief as possible and dress warm. Wear a hat, several layers of loose fitting clothing, boots, and gloves. Pay attention to the ground as you walk, watching for wet spots and ice. Pay attention to shivering - it is the first sign of heat loss. If you must go out, be sure someone knows where you are.

Get plenty to eat and drink during cold weather. Good nutrition will help your body stay warmer. Alcoholic and caffeinated beverages cause your body to lose heat more rapidly, so you may want to limit them. Consume warm, sweetened beverages or broth based soups to help you maintain your body temperature better.



Exercising and fall prevention activities all year long will help with preventing falls in the winter. Fall prevention activities include exercising, ensuring your medications have been reviewed by your doctor or pharmacist, and having your vision checked.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention suggests planning ahead for weather-related emergencies. Listen to weather forecasts regularly and keep an emergency supply kit.

Emergency Supply List:

- Keep several days supply of food that does not require cooking or refrigeration such as:
 - Bread
 - Crackers
 - Cereal
 - Canned Foods
 - Dried Fruits

Emergency Supply List (continued):

- It is recommended to keep five gallons of water per person in case of frozen pipes.
- Be sure to keep at least one week's worth of all needed medications.
- An alternative way to heat your home in case of power failure.
- Blankets
- Matches
- Fire extinguisher
- First Aid Kit
- Flashlight
- Battery Powered Radio
- Battery Powered Clock
- Extra Batteries
- Non-electric can opener
- Special need items such as diapers, hearing aid batteries, etc.



Prepare your home for winter.

- Be sure that you have a working smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector.
- If you use a wood stove or fireplace for heat, ensure that the chimney or flue has been properly cleaned.
- An easy to read thermometer will help you monitor the temperature in your home.
- Insulate water lines to prevent freezing pipes.
- Weather proof your home as much as possible by adding weather stripping around storm doors and windows.

If you need assistance preparing your home or your emergency supply kit please contact your local Area Agency on Aging and Independent Living. To find the agency near you visit <http://chfs.ky.gov/dail/AreaAgenciesonAging.htm> or call 877-293-7447.

For more information:

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention— <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/>
- National Weather Service—<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/oun/?n=safety-winter-overview>

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